

Knocking at the College Door

Projections of High School Graduates by State and Race/Ethnicity, 1992-2022

MASSACHUSETTS

At over 3.3 million, the nation's graduating class of 2007-08 is projected to be history's largest. In fact, 2007-08 will mark the last year in an era of continuous growth in the nation's production of high school graduates, a period that reaches back to 1994. Over that time, the number of graduates swelled by 35.7 percent. In 2008-09, however, our country will begin a protracted period during which its production of high school graduates is expected to stagnate, assuming existing patterns persist. The number of graduates nationally will dip slightly over the next several years before growth resumes at a slower pace around 2015. Ultimately, projections indicate that between 2004-05 (the last year of available actual data) and 2021-22, the number of high school graduates will grow by approximately 265,000, or 8.6 percent.

The national data obscure significant variations in this picture at the regional and state levels, however. Regionally, in the decade leading up to 2004-05, the number of high school graduates grew the fastest in the West at 34 percent, with the South growing by 23.5 percent, the Northeast by 20.7 percent, and the Midwest by 14.2 percent. But the regions face very different futures in the years to come. The South will see the most growth in its production of high school graduates, at about 9 percent by 2014-15; and the West's numbers will climb by 7.1 percent. But the number of graduates produced in the Northeast and the Midwest will decline – by 6.1 and 3 percent, respectively.

As with the national view, the regional picture masks considerable variation at the state level (Figure 1). Massachusetts produced about 11,800 more graduates in 2004-05 than

Figure 1. Percent Change in Graduates from Public and Nonpublic High Schools Between 2004-05 and 2014-15

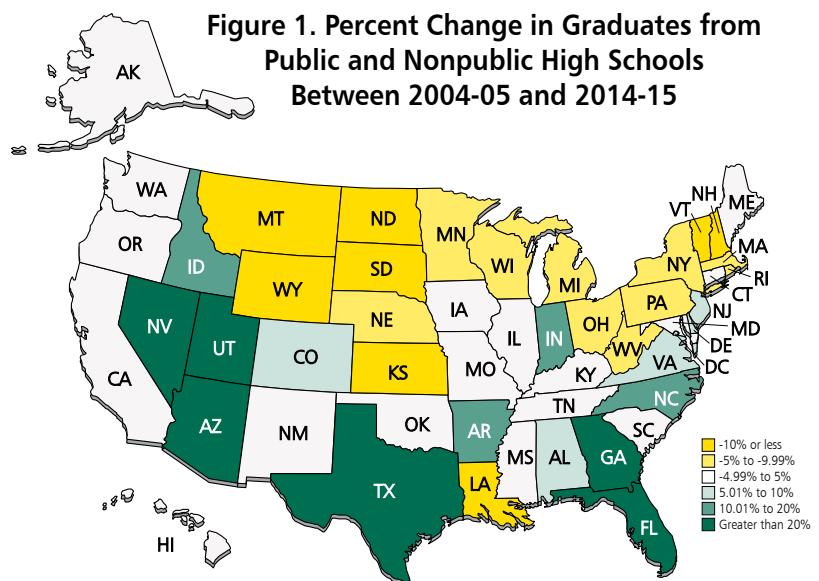
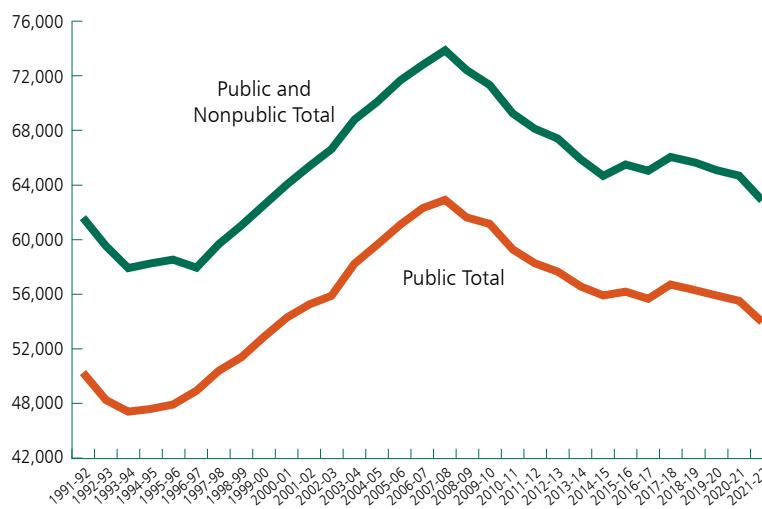


Figure 2. Massachusetts High School Graduates 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)



it did a decade earlier, an increase of 20.3 percent. Projections indicate that the state's number of graduates will grow through 2007-08 before beginning a sustained and substantial decline, assuming existing patterns of high school completion and migration continue. Massachusetts projects to produce about 3,760 more high school graduates in 2007-08 than it did in 2004-05, an increase equal to about 5.4 percent.

Massachusetts was among the states with rapid growth in its production of high school graduates between 1996-97 and 2004-05, the most recent year of actual data from public schools (Figure 2). In 2004-05, 59,665 students graduated from public high schools in the state, a number that included 11,986 more graduates than were produced in 1994-95, representing growth of 25.1 percent. Nonpublic schools in the state added an estimated 10,500 in 2004-05, which was a little lower than the number who graduated in 1991-92. Of Massachusetts total number of high school graduates

each year, nonpublic schools produced an estimated 15 percent, on average. But projections indicate that nonpublic schools' production of graduates will slip even faster than public schools in the years ahead.

Along with much of the rest of the nation, Massachusetts is poised to enter a new period characterized by much more stagnant growth or declines in the production of high school graduates. After reaching a peak in 2007-08 at nearly 63,000, the state will see a sharp decline in the number of public high school graduates each year through 2014-15, assuming a continuation of existing patterns of enrollment, progression, and completion. During that timeframe, the number of high school graduates is forecast to drop by over 8,000 (12.5 percent). Subsequently, projections indicate that production will continue declining, after a brief reprieve in 2015-16, through 2017-18.

The racial/ethnic composition of Massachusetts's public high school graduating classes will continue to diversify over the coming decade and beyond (Figure 3). In 1994-95, White non-Hispanics accounted for 83.6 percent of the graduates from the state's public high schools. A decade later, that proportion had dropped slightly to 79.4 percent. By 2014-15, the proportion of White non-Hispanics will have fallen to about 75.1 percent.

These changes are roughly comparable to the experience of states all over the country. Although the magnitude may differ substantially, the nation as a whole is undergoing sweeping changes in the racial/ethnic composition of its population. In Massachusetts, as in other states, the big changes are the result of rapid growth in the number of Hispanic high school students and graduates, coupled with a shrinking number of White non-Hispanics in the educational pipeline. While immigration has contributed to the growth of the Hispanic population, signs of the continuing demographic shift are evident

in data showing a dramatic increase in the number of Hispanic births, which is due in part to a higher fertility rate among Hispanic women.

Figure 4. Massachusetts High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity, 1991-92 to 2004-05 (Actual), 2005-06 to 2021-22 (Projected)

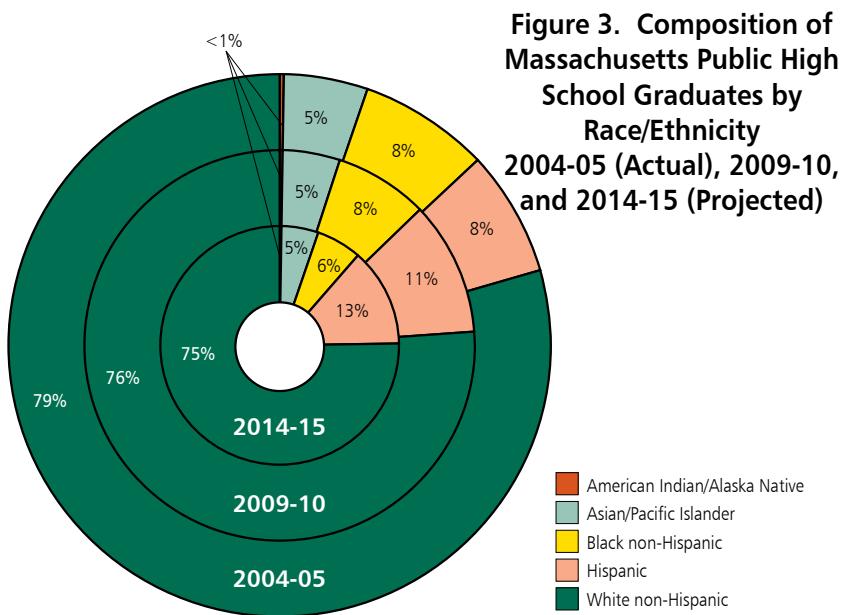
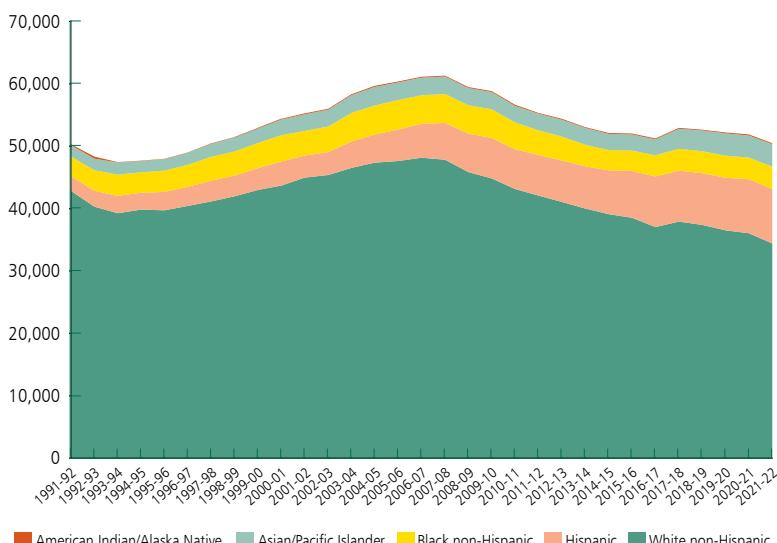


Figure 3. Composition of Massachusetts Public High School Graduates by Race/Ethnicity 2004-05 (Actual), 2009-10, and 2014-15 (Projected)

Hispanic graduates from public schools in the state numbered 4,532 in 2004-05. But within a decade Hispanic graduates are projected to increase by about 55 percent, to around 7,000 (Figure 4). In the process, they will surpass Black non-Hispanics as the largest minority group in public graduating classes. Black non-Hispanic graduates are forecast to drop in number by almost 1,400 (30 percent) from their 2004-05 level of 4,638. Asians/Pacific Islanders will also see their number of graduates fall slightly over the same span, by about 370 (12.5 percent) from 2,953. But the most substantial decreases will be among White non-Hispanic graduates, whose numbers will slip by about 8,300 (17.4 percent) from their 2004-05 level of 47,369. Finally, American Indians/Alaska Natives, which accounted for just 173 graduates in 2004-05, are projected to see a reduction of about 16 percent over the same timeframe.

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